

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY PROGRAM "E-NEWS"**

Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Jeff Vonk, Director  
Dale Garner, Wildlife Bureau Chief  
Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 2005

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### **New Addition to Iowa Bird Conservation Area Program**

by Bruce Ehresman, DNR Wildlife Diversity Program Biologist

Just a few short weeks ago, about 100 people attended the dedication ceremony of the Chichaqua-Neal Smith Grasslands Bird Conservation Area. The event was hosted by the Polk County Conservation Board, and there was general excitement amongst participants for the potential that this area holds for grassland birds. This area becomes Iowa's seventh BCA, and like all other BCAs, it contains its own special characteristics that contribute to its uniqueness. The two other major partners in this venture include the Polk County Conservation Board and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Each of these agencies own and manage large areas of public land situated at the north and south ends of this BCA, respectively. All told, there are more than 15,000 acres in permanent habitat protection within this ~76,500 acre BCA. Another important aspect of this BCA is that over 31% of this entire BCA already exists in some type of grassland cover, already surpassing the Model BCA minimum requirement for 25% of this area to be in grassland landcover. This grassland habitat provides important nesting and foraging habitat for declining birds like short-eared owls, northern harriers, Henslow's sparrows, bobolinks and eastern meadowlarks.

For interested landowners and land managers, guidelines for how to manage birds in various habitats are available upon request from Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program. The BCA designation opens possibilities for some landowners (who live within the BCA) to get special habitat planning assistance from DNR's Private Lands Program staff. BCA status also can give landowners extra points when competitively applying for certain USDA Farm Program practices. BCA partners already are exploring what might be done to encourage more birders and other wildlife watchers to utilize this area. Future plans are aimed at developing a birding trail guide, which will include a BCA bird list and a map featuring some of the BCA's best birding areas. One of the long-term goals for the Chichaqua-Neal Smith Grasslands BCA is to restore prairie-chickens to their landscape; a worthy goal indeed!

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### **Most Keeping Plate with Higher Fee**

By Mark McInroy & Ross Harrison

Iowans' support for natural resources has become more evident after a significant fee increase for their favorite specialty license plate is resulting in about 90 percent of them keeping the plate on their vehicles.

Legislation in 2004 increased the annual renewal of the 'goldfinch and rose' license plate from \$10 per year to \$25. The one-time purchase price went from \$35 to \$45. Prices went up to help the state take advantage of federal funding for wildlife species of special conservation concern.

The new prices put Iowa's natural resource plate closer to those of other states. Income from the plate will double the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program budget for those species that are not funded by hunting and fishing license income. The plate also continues to fund the Resource Enhancement and Protection program for public conservation land, habitat, historical activities and outdoor education.

"We were a little concerned that the license plate pricing increase would see a serious drop in plate renewals," said Dale Garner, DNR wildlife bureau chief. "However, for the first four months of the year, renewal rates are down only about 11 percent. And first-time buyers of the plate are actually 50% up from a year ago. We are very, very grateful for the support from our wildlife enthusiasts," he said.

For more information on the natural resource license plate, go to [www.iowareap.com](http://www.iowareap.com), or contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at the Boone Wildlife Research Station 515-432-2823.

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## License Plates to Make Big News Soon!

The Iowa Wildlife Diversity Program will make an exciting announcement about the Natural Resource license plate, tentatively as early as August. Watch the media, and read all about it in the next issue of *WILDLIFE DIVERSITY NEWS*.

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## A Farewell Message from Mark "Mac" McInroy

Recently I was accommodated a transfer request with the Upland Game research program located here at the Boone Research Station. This means I will no longer be the lead coordinator for the surveys within the Wildlife Diversity Program.

Along with the assistance and direction of Bruce, I will be sure to convey all necessary operational needs to the next person when they arrive. However, since it might take some time before my position fills, I will continue immediate and necessary assistance and coordination through the remaining survey season. I encourage you to call on me with any comments or questions until the process of replacement is completed (my email/phone will not change).

I am fortunate to have had a very broad and diverse working career in my life including general laborer, retail, manufacturing, production, management, and research. Each of these opportunities has exposed me to another group of thinkers and doers; in turn has taught me a broad manner of thinking and doing.

I expect we will still bump into each other from time to time, and we may occasionally correspond on specific items of need. Let it be known I have enjoyed my time being exposed to your professionalism and passionate desires as it pertains to Iowa's wildlife. I expect this exposure, the relationships, and experiences will lend well to my personal development as a wildlife professional.

I thank you all for it.--**MAC**

*"No life can escape being blown about by the winds of change and chance. And though you never know all the steps, You must learn to join the dance." -- Brian Stokes Mitchell*

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## Frog and Toad Call Survey Report is Available

By Mark McInroy, DNR Natural Resource Technician

The Iowa Frog and Toad Call Survey has been on-going all volunteer since 1991. Since its inception, there have been nearly 100 different volunteers submitting observations from over 200 routes all around the state. The first report of this survey was compiled and published in 1998 using 1991-1994 data. We are proud to announce a second report using 1995-2003 data is now available. Please visit our website at <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/divers.html> and click the link named "Frog and Toad Report". This is a 800KB size file in Adobe (PDF) format.

With our management staff time being stretched on our public lands, and the WDP program budget being so little, it is truly critical to coordinate a survey such as this through volunteers. The WDP is humbled and gracious for their diligent, loyal, and professional support.

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## Iowa Peregrines Aim for Record Year

By Pat Schlarbaum, DNR Natural Resource Technician

In 2005 Peregrine Falcon nesting in Iowa is soaring to new heights. At US Bank building in Cedar Rapids, seven-year-old female S/5 nested for sixth time with 78/E, that fledged from Kokomo, Indiana in 2003. This was the male's first brood. She has produced 17 young over her life, but this was the male's first brood. Four young were produced.

At Davenport, Scott County, 8/E\* (Muncie, In. 1999) and P/D (Dubuque 1999) produced one young in nest box provided by Mid-American energy at their corporate headquarters.

It appears there is a new territory at Burlington, Des Moines County, beneath Mississippi River Bridge. Former falconer, Lee Eberly, and birder John Rutenbeck report two peregrines flying to and from under the bridge in mid-June, and vocalizations were heard 4 or 5 times. There has been peregrine activity noted at this site in the past. No peregrines were identified, but plans are underway later in June to inspect under bridge, in hope of discovering young.

At American Republic Insurance building, Des Moines, female 8/\*T (which produced three young on Colonnade building in Minneapolis in 2002) is here for her second nesting attempt, paired with fifteen-year-old male 93T. This is his thirteenth year at this site, previously producing 31 young. Four eggs were laid and two males and two females were banded.

At Louisa Generating Plant, Louisa County, Jim Haack, MidAmerican Energy, reports an unidentified pair produced four young. At Bettendorf an unidentified pair are nesting under I-80 bridge. Plans are underway to inspect this site later in June to read bands on adults and hopefully band young peregrines.

At Chillicothe just upstream from Ottumwa, Alliant Energy personnel have at least one young in a nest box attached to their smokestack at 300 ft. level. Female Z/V (from Riverside, MN 1999, producing 9 young to date) was identified with an unidentified male in his second year.

We are hopeful to learn the outcome of a wild nesting peregrine pair at natural cliffside in bluffs upstream from Waukon Jct. on Mississippi River. Falconer Bob Anderson bands young at this site and we are hopeful for good news soon. Also in NE Iowa, a pair is nesting at Lansing on smokestack of Alliant Energy plant. Bob will confirm identity of adults at this site and outcome of any young produced.

Throughout 2004 and earlier this spring, female 39/E was being territorial at state capitol building in Des Moines. There have been no sightings of this bird throughout the nesting season. As a two year bird, she quite possibly has wandered to a different site. At any rate, we know of nine peregrine pairs this year.

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### **WDP Looks to the Future**

By Doug Harr, DNR Wildlife Diversity Coordinator

This is a rather short edition of our newsletter, with good reason. Our program is finally growing, the budget is improving, and new projects are on the horizon. So, with a small staff, that means we don't have quite enough time to produce a lengthy newsletter this summer.

You've read that Mac is transferring to a new job, and we will miss the special capabilities and talent he brought to our program. Nevertheless, we are now looking forward to bringing in a new team member with new capabilities.

The Iowa Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan is nearly complete, and we hope that acceptance by Congress this fall might mean increased and more permanent funding a year or two from now. In the meantime, annual State Wildlife Grants and new revenues from the Natural Resource license plate are helping us do more than ever before.

New Bird Conservation Areas continue to be designated, and we're partnering with groups like The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and other organizations to preserve or protect more lands for wildlife species of greatest conservation need.

We're considering identifying new "birding Trails" for Iowa, and we're working with Missouri and The Nature Conservancy on landscape conservation ideas that cross state lines. And, for the first time in five years, we plan to reinstate a limited small grants program.

There's more under discussion, including even the possibility of additional staff, so it's a great time to be part of the Wildlife Diversity Program. Work loads can be a bit hectic at times, but the future keeps looking brighter. I hope we can provide more details in future issues of this newsletter. Stay tuned!

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